THE BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL

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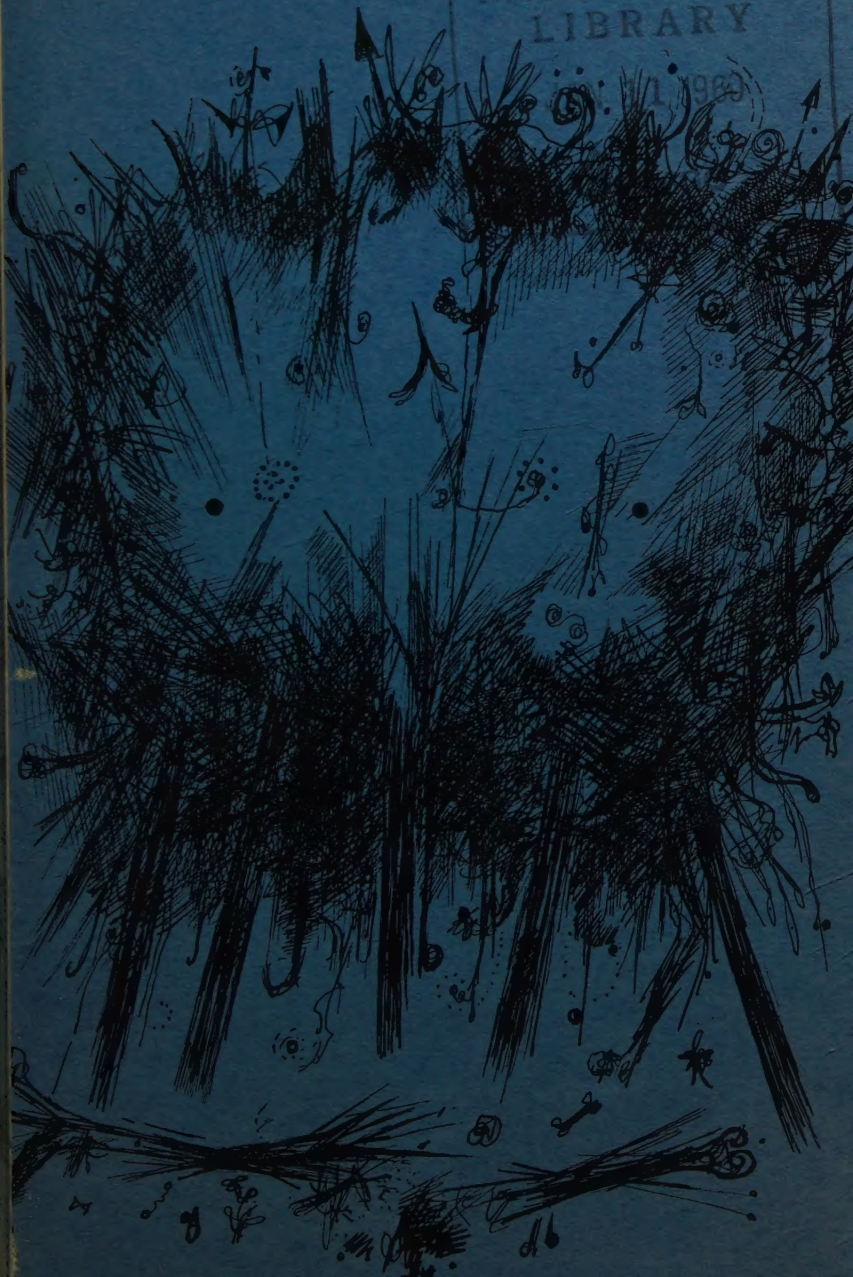

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THE POET AND THE CRIPPLE

They would never understand how, in April,
Confident and young
He had been led to lead the crippled girl
Underneath the shedding blossoms;
Nor would she afterwards, except as her testimony
To the court subscribers
Phrased the violation of the flowers,
Come upon the need or the knowing.
There was suddenly inexplicable brutality
In a soft and honeyed weather
And the bruise upon her body
Overwhelmed her memory.
Something strange and perverse
Deferred her deformity
Though over his urgent possessing shoulder
Her eyes fractured against the blossoms.
It was not only his darkness that seized her mouth
As he was turning to the earth beneath her
But that he had forgotten or been unable to feel
The petals that fell upon him.
They would never understand
How April could be so abused
And congruity violated in a pleasing season:
For the sake of a Spring and a passion
He had gone, they would say, to the devil.
They would never understand the charity
Of the heart to itself.

Robert Gajdusek

THE MAN WHO GRIEVED FOR GOD

At last, my Christ has gone to bed:
he sprang the catchword since he bled
the berry on our thorn of truth.
Allowing some leftover pain
which haunted him, and would again,
he shrouded his anemic youth.

With Christ so tired and so asleep,
now he could fret, or even weep
as sometimes tougher men will do;
he could revise theology
a little, though eternity
was still a primer for review.

But glossing God was his mistake
which grazed the bones and made them shake.
At most a fly-by-night relief
was all the intellect dare claim
in awkwardly engrafting shame
that rotted to a husk of grief.

With Christ unstirring, night was long
as wintertime, and bare of song.
The sounds were sharp enough to slice
a door, and he could set no lock
to stem the triple-crowing cock
or hush a soldier's clacking dice.

In shadow he must try to hide
(though Christ might toss against his side).
He troubled no one with his sighs,
but when a cracking lance of breath
suggested his (or God's) own death
he chilled, and almost said, *Arise.*

Raymond Roseliep

LITTLE BELL

This bell is too small
to herald the coming of a king,
but big enough to know under what stone
right answers are buried.

Ten-toothed and open-mouthed,
it sings of Indra and of Siva,
with sweet breath and soft brass words
like: natya, nrtya, and nrtta.

Little bell, I said, Tell me
how high the soul leaps
when the bones are unjointed one by one
and left to whiten on uncircled sand?

There was almost no sound,
as if an elephant was walking on marble
or a mouse was climbing a pagoda.
But the bell sat on its tongue,
as if it were afraid a cat would get it.

Listen to me, little bell, I said,
and shook it to enliven its overtones,
I want to believe how high the soul leaps
and what happens to the silhouette.

Breath came,
and the bell sang of Indra and of Siva,
with sweet breath and soft brass words
like: natya, nrtya, and nrrta;
(which neither the gravity-minded world,
nor the tormented night, nor I,
could understand)
then sat on its tongue,
as if it were afraid a cat would get it.

There was a beating of too-much drum

and the house lights dimmed
as I gathered the little bell
and hurtled it as high as the soul leaps
when the bones are unjointed one by one
and left to whiten on uncircled sand.

And, on whatever is left untouched.

Parm Mayer

SURVIVOR

Now I remember nothing but snow blown
over runways after chocks released the wheels
while throttles spun four stopped propellors one
by one into four arcs and blurs of steel . . .
Plateaus receded underneath the wings
like shores withdrawing in a clipper's wake.
Lakes lidded with ice opaque as paraffin
diminished downward as I watched quick flakes
of snow

and frost congealing on the cockpit glass
or swirling back into the slipstream night.
I saw the motors flare blue jets of gas
below the ailerons until the lights
at each dihedral-tip revealed high peaks
too near to be avoided and a wall
of rock that split the fuselage like flak
before we crashed and vanished in a pall
of snow.

Samuel Hazo

THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS

1.
God was first a dog and loving him
As much a sport as ball or rolling down
A hill to see the worlds go spin around—
The latest sun to throw a galaxy.
His eyes were blameless dead under your hands
And with his tongue he licked away the fat
Of womb to shape a scrappy son of God,
A secret playmate of the balls of heaven.

Grinding your teeth at fathers in their towers,
Whitened faces in the wine, and mothers,
Hiding from their men, behind the looms—
Left to wilder into namelessness—
How you came to praise these bitter ferns!
Until what woke, snarled, snapped at your belt?
An old shepherd dog come out of the wood
To eat your rage and warm your loins with fur.

His doggy shape domesticated fire,
Made you family to the sparks of night,
The sighs beneath the boughs, a smiler to stars,
And under an igloo sheet in the midnight sun,
He played at Eskimo with a cold nose,
Harpooned you, skewered and turned you above the flames,
Making you sing: O fire, me, the young rider!
Alive at last and kinsman to my father!

2.
But Paris grew a foot and turned away
From fabled woods and ghosts at the mirror lake;
The black bread of shepherds began to stale.
His heart demanded touch of Priam's beard

In kiss of lineage or another king,
Ichor-veined, or was it what the wind
One day said he could be? So down to Troy,
Freighted with a soul of skinny birds
And croaker frogs to sell there in a plaza
Where good flesh is dear. The traders laughed
To see the way he held his cages high:
"Ho boy, let's see 'em, touch 'em before we buy!"

So all the holes within him opened up
And pigeons flew with messages for kings
Among the vats and baskets by the gates,
Where every fruit was bruised, each thumb
grape-stained,
And yet the ogre fed and called for more:
For snow, for mead, for what the city's tariff
Choked and burned outside the city's walls,
And the lad sickened to see men work at God,
Laying populations as a plank
So that the modish deity could stroll
Down boulevards of quiet symmetry:
A god who picked at night in garbage pails
Or wept at all that slithered down the drain.
A god of double cross, a god in two,
A god afoot to find his other face!
So did men pay for cenotaphs and peace,
Hoarding the tarnished gold picked in a war
With brother self no victory could claim,
And into Paris tramped the veterans
Who knew a leg or finger when they saw one
Waiting to be used on peg or stump.
Then Paris called for God to fill him up
Because he saw that now he was half-made,
A slave with open mouth before his Lord
Or one back-turned to bear his might behind.
And God was a Russian bondsman pummeling stones

Into a street. Across the gutter there,
What envy shook these two aristocrats,
What admiring pity that so held them
In hot vibrato between two magnet horns?
One City fell and rose upon that sight
In hopeless dream that could not last the night.

3.
She found him broken by the two
That never would be one
And so she taught him love
By number three:
A cave where buried hope would grow,
Two springs where infant joy could feed
To climb beyond the slough.

But God and I were one, he cried.

Be still, my love,
A home, a love,
A work is what you need to do.

But I must wrestle with my God:
I must take him, he must take me,
Old Priam cannot long deny his blood.

Others will be,
Others will be,
Her whispers swelling into echoes,
Let a holy trinity
Shape, define, and comfort you.

Hausfrau! Witch!
You steal the cream
Wrought from my pains and dreams
To churn a common butter
For rotting banquet boards.
Let cities fall

If men cannot be lovers.

O flesh that would be God!
O man made dumb and mad
By holiest dream
Of man's nobility!

Either the two be one
Or else will there be none.

The world is never turned by twos
But three.

Then what of me and history,
Am I of no account,
Never ends, merely means,
Holding breath on mere caprice
Out of smashing eggs with worms?
My will no more than testaments
Written on my guttering bones?

Come make your peace
Not with a one or two
But three.
You cannot leap into Ptolemy's mirrors
Or wear as jewels the Hapsburg pox.
But turn,
Turn, O love,
To the wild life beyond
These chartered waves.
Hitch a new spring
To these winter loins
And bring—

Wars and rage!
Bodies fit for birds and dogs,
While shades moan at the gates.
Your three's a wheel of Jagannath,
Balabhadra and Subhadra.

My wheel's the only ride to hope
For fathers and sons,
Enemies and lovers,
Who kill each other with hate and love.
Rape a maid, if rape you will,
And I will grant you history,
For just the apple, please,
To show that I am right.

And Paris sailed to Sparta
Out of spite.

Gerard G. Brissette

VACUUM

AS under bell-jar the stridently clattering
alarm-clock's rage dulls to a tinny
buzz, and silence (save sibilance
of air-pump) dead to a deaf sense,
though beneath the exhausted dome the tiny
hammer is furiously soundlessly continuously beating,

SO after violence—
hand come bloody away from
belly; wheels still stupidly revolving;
soft echoes of detonation blundering
about—is suddenly nothing,
in that peculiar silence,

to breathe: nothing to do: under the glass dome
all is unmoving, unbreathing
(save a frantic unheard clattering:
the heart furiously soundlessly continuously beating).

Tim Reynolds

A RIVER IS NAMED

". . . and one of the conquistadores, Don Luis Arguello, striking east from the Pueblo de San Francisco in quest of gold, glory, and the souls of men, came upon a river along which a myriad of birds nested in the lofty cliffs."

The day ends
when my armor chills
and my skin shrinks from the wet leather.
We marched against the sun all day
through hills like smooth brown buttocks
with the fine dark hair of little fir trees
in the crotches of the slopes . . .
Damn the image! We are gone many days,
and my loins ache . . .

This is high country now,
the peaks lifted with spruce,
the open saddles brush-choked
with bushes of strange red bark, pale leaves,
and fibrous wood tough enough
to blunt good Spanish steel.
In the dark declivities
ferns dampen the red earth.
The river here is cold even in the shallows
and tasteless with purity.

We camp tonight
on a beach of big gravel,
smooth eggs spawned by the hissing serpent-stream,
but dark, slimed with flung spray.
There is a rubble of rock
out of the mountain behind us,
a tailing chalked and whited like a mound of skulls.
I think of this valley as an alien serpent's den—

cold, moss-smeared, wet with green juice.
My head aches from my helmet
and the ceaseless noise of water
smashed like bottle glass
against the tilted black teeth of the river . . .
My armor will have rusted by morning . . .
I miss the hot plains and the easy dust.

I walk down to the stream through the heavy pines.
They shake me.
They are so upright, so full of green calm,
like the admonishing fingers of God . . .
I stand in the long brown grass
near an eddy
watching a rose-blue sunset film the water . . .
Flecks of solid color float the pool.
I stoop and catch some. Mother of God!
Here are feathers!
The river is breasted like a wild pigeon—
white, gold, rose, blue, gray—
delicate filaments of the darkening sky,
a molting of fallen angels!

Tomorrow
we will break camp early,
cross the plumed water,
and ascend these twisted hills.
There can be no gold here,
not even of the sun.
Too much of the beauty of darkness
is here,
along this—River of the Feathers.

Richard Curry Esler

POET

If the poet is tone-deaf as to sounds, it is best to rely upon the phonetic symbols above each group of rhyming words in the rhyming dictionary that terminates this book, or upon dictionary markings. Many people can not distinguish the obvious difference in sounds between this pair of words, which do not rhyme:

north, forth.

Take away the th sound, and many people still hear no difference between this pair of words, which do not rhyme:

nor, fore.

Take away the r sound, and some people still hear no difference between this pair of words, which do not rhyme:

gnaw, foe.

Gnaw plus r plus th can not rhyme with foe plus r plus th.
—Clement Wood, **The Complete Rhyming Dictionary and Poet's Craft Book (1936), pp. 26-27.**

O, lucky poet tone-deaf
As to something else than sounds!
(Tone-deaf to the turning leaf?
Tone-deaf to autumn wounds?)

He walks in step with what he hears,
Observes both beat and pitch;
Without a circumflex he fares
Foe plus *r* plus *th.*

This striding, compass-perfect poet
Never strays to *know-earth.*
Impeccably he sounds the note
And sets his foot to *gnaw-earth.*

Conrad Hilberry

THE BAWDY BALLAD OF HENRY SAINT-JOHN VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE

Lord Bolingbroke was not a couth youth
(says the *DNB* with regrets). Even marriage vows
for him were for naught (says the book said his
spouse).
Sing *Hosanna!* Sing *Halloween!*
Sing *Tenderloin!* Sing *O'Faolain!*
More power to the swain!

He took up with a demi-rep
which is (says Webster and I quote)
a lady whose chastity is suspect.
Sing *Bon Appetit!* Sing *Seven Up!*
Sing *Boling!* and sing *Broke!*
More power to the bloke!

A demi-rep, then, (one suspects)
is half of a rep and the opposite sex
of a lady suspected of chastity, shucks.
Sing *Mint Julep!* Sing *Chastitit!*
Sing *Demi!* and sing *Rep!*
More power to the chap!

One day (the learned *DNB* snitches)
His Lordship rode horseback minus his breeches
(or for that matter any other stitches).
Sing *My!* Sing *O'My!* Sing *Godiva!*
Sing *Gomorrah!* Sing *For Shame!* Sing *Egad!*
More power to the lad!

It is hinted by our Impeccable Source
that the drunkard could barely sit up on his horse
in pursuit of a maid with a peccable arse.
Sing *Hiho! Tallyho!* Sing *Oh Catch Her!*
Sing *Goings On Than There Were None Sucher!*
More power to the lecher!

But at last even this contagious high fever
of living with joy and of *joie de vivre*
came to an end on a lonely pillow.
Sing *Alas!* and *Alack!* and *A'Never!*
Sing *O Bit of a Rotter in Hellow!*
More power to the fellow!

Felix Anselm

THREE POEMS

To a Former Dinosaur

You, my poor contemporary lizard,
Viewed through the wrong end of our
binoculars,
What Alice-potion have you imbibed
Falling down time's unlit rabbit hole?

And Brontosaurus, they say, was bigger yet
Having two brains (one for his monstrous tail).
I forget how many other dwindled
While you, at least, learned to change
your colors.

Maxine Cassin

Dismemberment at the Beach

I buried you
ceremoniously mounding sand over limbs and torso.
Your head detached itself
and lay lonely-eyed upon the burning shore.
After some buffeting of waves
A hand crept forth,
A warm and living thing upon the sand.
The message passed from head to friendly hand:
"Have we met before?
Some feeling seems to bind us in the sun."

"How hot I am!" the hand said to the head.
"I, too," replied the head. "Could we be one?"

Maxine Cassin

Chicken

Living in coops
Hardly aware how our dregs accumulate,
We too have some pecking order
And surmise a cleaner environment exists
somewhere
Beyond the cage,
But (tell me) who will leave?
Here we have quite enough scratch
And cans of water thoughtfully provided
By the kindly gent
Who one by one removes
And solemnly weighs each feathered friend.

Maxine Cassin

TWO POEMS

The Innocence of Narcissus

The red claws of the hawk confess a guilt
She would not hide even if she knew the way;
Murder lies openly putrescent to mortals,
Making them fly cringing from the charnel house:
All know, all see, all acquiesce in pain.
Death to the cruel; we know him by his scar.

But here is one so fair the hells of longing
Shrink at his approach for shame at staining
Beauty. The very pool in which he gazes
Rises toward the source of his reflection.
Only the echoes dare entreat him; lacking
Body, they know that he is safe. Dreaming
Of his image, his guiltless joy surges,
A mirrored sea of love,
while at his feet
The purple flowers claw the air, and die.

Larry Rubin

This Side of the Looking Glass

When I awoke in June, I saw
A model plane dangling by a thread
From the ceiling light, its nose block
Lumpily unsandpapered, splotches
Where the dope had failed to dry
Properly; a sticky flag nailed
Over the bureau, candy stripes
And grotto blue; the round mirror

Doubling the image of June outside:
Oleander, pink against the almost
Purple sky (no spectrum touches
Those perfect shades). Like adult lust,
There would be a pull toward the blue
In the mirror, a flush of thrusting thought
To go through, like Alice, drink the blue
Elixir, and melt into purple forever.

To dissolve into the blue and pink of June
Was hard, for everything was solid:
The plane, the flag, the mirror—even the sun
That flashed them into essence—it too was rock.
I found I had to be content with breathing
Their separate patterns into my single brain,
Keeping the melting merely an idea.

Yet locking me this side of the looking glass
Was wisdom on somebody's part
For all June's purple sky—
I would have been away for the summer,
And oleander deepens in July.

Larry Rubin

TWO POEMS

Jack Kelleher and the Hatchet Club

In Newport, on lower Thames Street, there is or was
A club for old men, run with young men's dollars:
The Hatchet Club. It is; that is all it does
Or did. It has no high purpose, no parlors.

There, old men, nodding like pigeons in a park,
Their heads low on scraggy fronts, their feet absurd
Listen to an ancient radio, a Romanesque church,
Chant out the ballgame, the weather, the word.

Here at ninety, when I knew him best,
Came Jack Kelleher to hack out his weeks
In chill spells of coughs and quirks,
Having lived a plateau without valleys or peaks.

Jack Kelleher, once a maker of gates and fences,
Could still see the curlicued wenches
And staves which he wrought
To imprison the rich from the poor.

For pleasure he walked and saved
The dollars chipped from his stone and iron
Until they built his wall and caved
Him up like a dowdy and lonely lion.

Now with others of his kind he sits to wait
For what it is the old wait for—
Knowing it must come, hopeful it will be late.
The Hatchet Club: good place for such a watch.

Nancy Sullivan

Drowning

(In memory of seventy-five men drowned aboard the submarine Affray *in the English Channel one Spring morning.)*

When Caesar's craft toppled and sank
Who bothered? Anyone?
It was a quiet procedure.
I doubt that Cleopatra shed any Shavian tears
When a Roman seaman slipped under some sprightly wave
And caused just the slightest tremor in a world not wholly hers.
But the *Affray* could not fall further.
In a common casket, the silent seventy five,
Wedged between rock and Norman treasure,
Lie snarled in the wild channel seizure
Under a greater conqueror than Caesar.

What of drowning? Though the craft be a canoe?
To dive deep in whirling water hurls the body
Down and under screeching pressure
Into a mocking green-grey pleasure.
Yet, a head held under thinks it torture.
Who of those on the valuable sea floor
Dying close by some imperial galleon
Knows, or knowing, seeks its lure?

All I know of bravery are some rather pleasant stories
From the *Iliad.*
I wonder if one of the *Affray's* crew,
As his ship slipped slowly down
Like a broken and heroic snail,
Died with some other definition on his lips?

Nancy Sullivan

ADAM

On the third day I was dust,
ordinary common dust
like you see on a country road
in a dry spell nothing
expected of me, me
expecting nothing neither.

On the sixth day he comes along
and blows. "In my own image too,"
he says like he was doing
me a favor.

Sometimes I think if he'd
waited a million years
by then I'd been tired
maybe being dust
but after only two, three
days, what can you expect? I
wasn't used to being
even dust and he goes
and makes me into Man.

He could see right away
from the expression on my face I
didn't like it so
he's going to butter me up
he puts me in this garden only I
don't butter.

He brings me all the animals I
should give them names—what
do I know of names? "Call
it something," he says, "anything
you want," so I make names up—
lion, tiger, elephant, giraffe—
crazy, but that's what he wants.

I'm naming animals since 5 A.M.,
in the evening I'm tired I
go to bed early, in the
morning I wake up, there she
is sitting by a pool
of water admiring herself.

"Hello, Adam," she says, "I'm
your mate. I'm Eve." "Pleased
to meet you," I tell her
and we shake hands.

Actually I'm not so pleased—
from time immemorial nothing,
now rush rush rush; two
days ago I'm dust, yesterday
all day I'm naming animals,
today I got a mate already.

Also I didn't like the way
she looked at me
or at herself in the water.

Well, you know what happened, I
don't have to tell you, there
were all those fruit trees—
she took a bite, I
took a bite, the
snake took a bite and

quick like a flash—
out of the garden.

Now I'm not complaining;
after all, it's his garden,
he don't want nobody eating
his apples, that's his business.

What irritates me is
the nerve of the guy.

I didn't ask him to make me
even dust; he could have left me
nothing like I was before—
and such a fuss for one lousy
little apple not even ripe
(there wasn't that much time
from Creation, it was
still Spring), I didn't
ask for a mate, I didn't
ask for Cain, for Abel, I
didn't ask for nothing but
anything goes wrong, who's to blame?
. . . Sodom, Gomorrah, Babel, Ararat . . .
me or my kids catch it,
. . . fire, flood, pillar of salt.
"Be patient," Eve said, "a
little understanding. Look,
he made it, it was his idea,
it breaks down, so he'll fix it."

But I told him one day. "You're
in too much of a hurry. In
six days you make everything
there is, you expect it to run
smoothly? Something's always
going to happen. If you'd a thought

first, conceived a plan,
consulted a specialist, you
wouldn't have so much trouble
all the time."

But you can't tell him
nothing. He knows it all.

Like I say, he means well
but he's a meddler and
he's careless. He could
have made that woman so
she wouldn't bite no apple.

All right, all right,
so what's done is done
but all the same he
should have known better
or at least he could have blown
on other dust.

Nicholas Biel

DOVE COTE

We crossed the stable yard where brood mares paced,
(our nurse had turned us out—"Go take a run
before it rains.") slid through the fence, then climbed
the ladder to the dove cote—playhouse size—
above the whining kennels. Coral feet
pattered down small verandahs; coral set eyes
watched us swarm aloft. When murmurous silk
wings finally rose, we children opened the door,
scrambled inside. Our wrinkling noses sniffed
odor of whitewash droppings. "Smells like chalk."
"No, smells a bit like church." "It looks like one—
a little church." We stared at the slanting room
as explorers will (we'd not been there before)
saw streamers of moted light, saw cloistered nests
where pin feathered fledglings lay, where patient
birds
crooned drowsily. Arms hugging skinny breasts,
knees hunched to chin, the three of us settled down,
safe in this midway place. "I feel like an egg,"
one brother whispered, "waiting to be born."
Hounds wailed below. Doves, sighing on the roof,
moved with the gentle sound of beginning rain.

Jocelyn Macy Sloan

FALLING PAST

falling past the unpeering people
he admits yes this is the worst of it
thinking he'll reach ticktock rockbottom
and that he will not be the wiser
nor even really more beautiful
it had been the ease of letting go that had commended
the start of the fall
nobody had told him particularly not to do it
they had said after all that he was the sign and the
signatory
he had only to vault the railing and smile at the
nature of the game
he had only to say to himself smiling that his fingers
would hold to the railing
and as a matter of sheer principle his fingers had held
for a good long while
and nobody had seen him either to tell him to hoist
back up
or let go
because after all he was the sign and the signatory
so that smiling he had thought it was just as much in
the nature of the game
to see what would happen if he let go
and stopped insulting himself by the fingerbent
posture
which was not an attitude of giving at all but
curving into oneself
so that with a scream that instantly in the falling
became a sigh
he had spread out his white fingers
and resuming their normal color they spread out at
white
falling past the unpeering people

he admits yes this is the worst of it
because his imagination is stricken
since all he does is fall
and all he can see is outside
he flushes with embarrassment
falling past a broken-nosed shovel
and a mirror buttoning its vest
and a cup of eyebrows
and a dogeared drainpipe
falling past something like spring something like summer something like autumn and winter and something for christ's sake like waking up
but he keeps on falling
and he starts to feel the bad taste of morality
it isn't right he's being punished for the game
and the scream that became a sigh once again is a scream
perhaps the punishment will be broken
and the unpeering people begin to peer
and now he suffers with embarrassment
so swift his fall that they see him as a child
look at the poor child falling they cry
and they pity the child
and his embarrassment is agony
I am not a child I am not a child he cries
but nobody can hear him
he can only hear himself
and it fails to convince him
falling through his body that breaks his fall
so that he lives to find himself in the center of a furnace of fire
wide flat thin flames that wave through him like banners
but surely after falling he cannot die by fire
it is somehow the height of embarrassment but he cannot think why

so that he beats against the furnace walls seeking a
way out
but there is none
and he burns and burns and burns
dying at the height of his embarrassment because he
knows in a moment he will be able to go up
again in flame

Gil Orlovitz

SUMMER CONCERT

He attacked that console
like a terrier after a woodchuck.
Bach rumpled the cricket night:
The bright little musical mice
chased in and out of the pipes,
slid down the balcony banisters,
did cartwheels into the orchestra.
And then, with magnificent aplomb,
Chin up and shoulders swaying,
He rippled his fingers
and twiddled his toes
And charmed them all back to the nest again.

Ray Mizer

PETTY MURDER

A curious business,
This killing of porcupines.
The town pays fifty cents apiece
To know that they are dead,
And every one I kill means
One less to tear apart our apple trees.
These reasons make petty murder
A good thing.

But there at evening
In the orchard, along the road,
Or in a clump of aspen,
Where I have heard the snap
Of tender twigs
And the rustling of tree tops,
I am not thinking about bounties
Or apple crops.

It is a mastery over dumbness
To lodge soft lead in their flat skulls,
To watch the heavy blackness thrash,
Sicken, and tumble backward
Through the foliage
Until it lies bedded in its blood.
Yet petty murder makes me wonder
What it is that dies at dusk.

Albert McLean, Jr .

FRANCESCA DA RIMINI

Nevertheless,
although her dress was white and gold,
the girl has sinned; for she has held
huge ugliness

upon the slight
hold of her bright thighs, accepted
the grey husband into her bed,
permitting night,

by leveling
its cordial blind, to ease her task
(a darkness on what he might ask
of reveling),

before her sleep.
This is my case: this woman's was
the rose's face: if beauty owes
its beauty keep

and grace, traitor
to its bone, who then can mention
what she has sinned: sold for crude stone
all her rare store

of loveliness,
as if the gift demanded no
long service to be done. If so,
then is not this

the sin that bent
Francesca down? Rose pressed to rose
and thorn crushed into thorn: love was
her punishment.

T. Henry Smith

SONNET FOR A RAINY DAY

"May you be greeted by a sun that does not burn, in a home without dust, by friends without stain, by a love without flaw. You wise and gentle Buddha . . . grant us patience in our ordeal and purity of will, so that this hope may not be confounded . . ."
(Strindberg, **The Ghost Sonata)**

The secret of the sun that does not burn,
The dustless home, the love that bears no stain,
Is innocence. Without the will to learn

That cloudless skies are really blank with pain,
You bless that sun for mellow-tempered days—
Until the dark reality of rain

Pours doubt upon that pretense of a blaze,
Drowns illusion, but grows the will to grieve.
No star defines itself with gentle rays:

That paradox you managed to believe—
The flameless sun—will mockingly return,
Perfected in a puddle. There perceive

The secret of the sun that does not burn
Is innocence without the will to learn.

Rosellen Brown

THREE POEMS

Song for Two Lovers

SHE. All longing is more bearable unloosed.
Oh, think of plotted shafts that targets break!
For fear your love in flight may be despised
Let caul and danger tame it now,
Let stillness reign, and lies.

HE. No longing is more bearable unloosed,
For left not arrowed hard our longings quake,
Contained in quiver, never spent, deprized:
Should mourn or danger caul my love
When mercy reigns your eyes?

Barry Spacks

To Her Priestly Lover

So full of poems prismed in her head,
Of richer piety than you conceive,
She groans, the graced one, on her bed,
And you the mortal makes her grieve.

I'd tell you drink her blood, consume her flesh:
Whatever else of love you understand,
Be careless of the doctrine you profess
And take the true communion from her hand . . .

But could your appetite accept such fare?
The Word drums here in body's imagery,
And braver priest than you might well beware
Of vows to so profound a ministry.

Barry Spacks

The City Mouse and the Country Mouse

Coelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt

Out from Bedlam on the train
That clackets you to boxer pup
To evening bridge to entertain
To sleep to struggle to wake up,

Speed the length of half-housed fields,
Released at dusk yet on a tether;
Don the mask of face that yields
To charms of semi-urban weather;

Heal the mind with native lore;
Let the heart be countrified;
For your sea and foreign shore
The wife-filled car at station side.

Barry Spacks

ITALIAN SECTION

1. Thomaso the baker

Loaf here on a cool day
and see the bread brown,
the stone oven stoked with coal.
Note the loaves leave
on the long wood spatula
as Thomaso's arms, like
brown loaves themselves,
move in and out among
the rustle of the thin white bags.
There's measured bustle here
and eh! says Thomaso, hey!
make some dough, make some more
dough.
And so they make the dough—
they mix it, they knead it,
they cut it, they mold it,
then into the oven, the
hot coal oven.
We buy it, hot for a quarter, hot,
for they're waiting at home and
go, says Thomaso, go, run!
Bread gets cold quick on a
cool day.

2. Mrs. Martino the Candy Store Lady

Listen to the hum of the
lemon ice machine, mashing

sugar, mushing ice, crushing
the pucker bellies of chubby lemons.
Twenty minutes, can you wait,
twenty minutes for lemon ice,
mumbles Mrs. Martino.
Meanwhile have a Milky Way,
look, they've been in the Frigidaire:
they're hard as bricks, they'll
chill your teeth
look, have a Milky Way.
So nibble while the engine jiggles,
the ice goes smash, the candy bars
go limp behind your teeth and
twenty minutes spin around,
twenty minutes spin around.
There are shadows in the shop,
there are candies on the counter,
there is ice cream in the freezer
but your eyes are on the accordion cups
the lemon ice is eaten from.
And twenty minutes pass like sluggish ice
as the cups grow larger with your eyes.

3. Ercole the Butcher

How many you want? asks Ercole
slowly, how many chops you want?
These will go nice in a big pot of sauce,
that's prime pork, Mrs. Spinelli.
Sometimes a floorsweep will earn you a bag
of potato chips or, if the sun's mean,
the big cold room door will let you in
to sit and freeze a little.

And Ercole's a black thing
with a white apron on his barrel front
with some red stain then and now
and there goes Ercole to saw a bone,
there goes Ercole to chop some bone.
Slip on the sawdust, slide on the floor,
listen to the beat of the chopping block
chunk, chunk,
chunk, says the chopper.
Ercole steps to wrap the pink slabs
we'll eat tonight, redder then
with salsa di pomadore simmered
for seeming fragrant centuries.
Ercole goes, slowly, to wrap the chops
and chunk, chunk go his big feet,
chunk, chunk.

4. Louie the Barber

Up the block, all you kids,
it's time for the shearing of hairs;
it's the day the sun makes Saturday,
church day tomorrow; it's the day
baldy Lou, he of the lollipops,
lowers the boom on your cowlicks and locks.
No pied piper, he: behind his chair
he's minstrel, however, once you're inside
with your nose a trunkful of pomade smells,
Vitalis, Wild Root Cream Oil, Charlie.
Is it baseball you're missing?
Are the bats thwacking in the back lot
while you bend your head and want to itch,
and the scissors snip and the mirror

near the chair beckons you to move just once?
Well, the Yanks won, says Louie yes, the Yanks
won and the Sox lost and what grade you
in now sonny?
Steady now, steady your head, one more swipe
of the comb (wish
I could comb *my* hair, says Louie,
see?).
The bald pate lowered to pat, the chuckle,
bene, bene, go home now, you're done,
next man, who's next?
Who's next, says Louie.

Lewis Turco

TWO POEMS

Dahlia-Cats

Like Persian cat faces, the red and yellow
dahlias drowse in the vase. The large
yellow one, quite frowsy, like an asleep
Tom, one petal, a fore-paw, leans on the
orange center, cat-mouth-colored, and
immobile.

The red one has sheathed claws under its
velvet sleeping. What world do they dream
of? Perhaps
an unstemmed one, with freedom to pounce
upon the bees, like mice.

Willis Eberman

Second Leafing

The crabapple will not flower again this year,
but a second leafing
has come to the lichen-spotted branches. How
delicate and pale
are the sparse, new leaves that came so late
after the blossoms had scattered.

I remember comparing this tree to my life, this

slender tree that bears no fruit at all,
but only fragile flowers that are crumbled by
the sun,
and die, and drift . . . "and from these branches,
as from my own,
no earthly fruit will be born."

The spiky branches sway
under the hot, low wind, and the new leaves
tremble.
Well, we have borne a little: those early blossoms
that went with an early wind to nowhere . . . and now
this second leafing
is like an attempt of the heart to conceive new
poems.

Willis Eberman

THE PRESIDENT

The President, and Mr. Nixon
Are in the kitchen, in the ice-box
Eating eggs (shells & all) the lettuce
The onions, and the garlic —which I
Eat fried. —Well, and fine! let them. Just now
I really don't give a damn. They eat.
They deserve to eat. And I eat too.
I eat the entire kitchen, the two
Of them, and the two of them, *themselves.*
It is not in the least difficult.
I mean for me. And I wash them down
With nineteen-cent blueblack Scripto ink.
Easily digested, in no way
Upsetting to the stomach. One eats.
It is a matter of creation.
Or can be. Is, eventually.
—And it is only democratic.
Altogether fitting and proper.
They, to be there in my kitchen, mad,
Ferocious, hungry, devouring, wise
Discreet —all my interests at heart.
My best interests. And *I,* sipping
My ink, *mad,* ferocious & hungry
Devouring them, discreetly, wisely
And mad, mad, creating the lettuce
The eggs, the egg-shells, the President
And Mr. Nixon, the onions, milk
The impossible; —mystery, *time*
God, God . . . TV-set before him, Ike
(Devourer, admirer, gourmet
Grinning, and inescapable)
Ike upon the screen, *Ike* within me,
The kitchen, the ice-box, my Scripto . . .

Robert Sward

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